

# DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

## Wessington Springs School District Continuous Improvement Monitoring Process Report 2006-2007

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**Dates of On Site Visit:** February 1, 2007

**Date of Report:** February 28, 2007

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This report contains the results of the steering committee's self-assessment and the validation of the self-assessment by Special Education Programs. The report addresses six principles – General Supervision, Free Appropriate Public Education, Appropriate Evaluation, Procedural Safeguards, Individualized Education Program and Least Restrictive Environment. Each principle is rated based on the following scale:

<b>Promising Practice</b>	The district/agency exceeds this requirement through the implementation of innovative, high-quality programming and instructional practices.
<b>Meets Requirements</b>	The district/agency consistently meets this requirement.
<b>Needs Assistance</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance.
<b>Needs Intervention</b>	The district/agency consistently does not meet this requirement and is out of compliance.
<b>Not applicable</b>	In a small number of cases, the standard may not be applicable for your district/agency. If an item is not applicable, the steering committee should briefly explain why the item is NA. Example – no private schools within the district boundaries.

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### **Principle 1 – General Supervision**

General supervision means the school district's administrative responsibilities to ensure federal and state regulations are implemented and a free appropriate public education is provided for each eligible child with a disability. The specific areas addressed in principle one are child find, referral procedures, children voluntarily enrolled by parents in private schools, students placed by the school district, improving results through performance goals and indicators (assessment, drop out, graduation), professional development, suspension and expulsion rates.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- District Instructional Staff Information

- Disabling Conditions
- Exiting Information
- Statewide Assessment Information
- Student progress data
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Screening

### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded the districts birth to five screening, the after school program and the districts birth to five year old preschool program are areas of promising practice. Also, weekly grade-level meetings are held to discuss students who are having difficulties and teacher-to-teacher meetings are held at the end of each school year.

### **Meets requirements**

The district has an effective pre-referral and referral system in place to ensure students are identified without unnecessary delay. The Wessington Springs School District does not have any children enrolled in private schools or any children placed in a private school. The comprehensive plan states the procedure to follow should a student is placed.

Wessington Springs School District uses data-based decision-making procedures to review and analyze school district-level data to determine if the district is making progress toward the state's performance goals and indicators. The district reviews/analyzes discipline data and revises policies/procedures if significant discrepancies are occurring between the long-term suspension and expulsion rates for children with and without disabilities.

Wessington Springs School District employs or contracts with an adequate supply of personnel who are appropriately supervised, and fully licensed or certified, to work with children with disabilities. Special education teachers attend professional development activities as needed to meet the needs of district children.

### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded the pre-school teacher is not endorsed in special education. If a child is on an IEP for something other than speech, the IEP must be written by a staff member who has an early childhood endorsement at Mid-Central Cooperative Educational Association.

## **Validation Results**

### **Promising practice**

The monitoring team validated the district birth to five preschool screening as an areas of promising practice. The district offers free pre-school services to all children on the day of the birth to five screening so children have the opportunity to be screened. The district felt the need to offer free pre-school services because so many parents work out of town and it is hard for them to take time off work and bring their children to the screening. All parents are encouraged to attend the

screening however, parents who are unable to attend are sent the screening results. The data shows that more children are screened due to this service. The number of children screened in 2005 was 13 and there were 36 children screened in 2006.

The Afterschool Program has been in effect for over six years and is a licensed day care. It has developed strong community acceptance since Boys Scouts, Girls Scouts, soccer, and the junior cheerleading programs were established through the after school program. Many of these activities have now become self sustaining. All children in the afterschool program are given an opportunity to participate in these activities as well as extra curricular activities through Wessington Springs School District. Tutoring, homework help, summer camps, cooking classes, an artist in residence and field trips have also been a part of the program. Fees for the program are considered on a sliding scale.

### **Meets Requirement**

The monitoring team could not validate the need for a certified early childhood special education teacher as an area in need of improvement on the day of the review. There currently are two children receiving special education services in the area of speech/language only. These services are provided by a licensed Speech/Language Pathologist. The district was cautioned however, that in the event a child enters the preschool program requiring early childhood special education services, they would need to have in place personnel qualified to teach a child of that age.

## **Principle 2 – Free Appropriate Public Education**

All eligible children with disabilities are entitled to a free appropriate public education in the least restrictive environment. The specific areas addressed in principle two are the provision of FAPE to children residing in group homes, foster homes, or institutions, making FAPE available when a child reaches his/her 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and providing FAPE to eligible children with disabilities who have been suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative days.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- District Instructional Staff Information
- Enrollment Information
- Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- Monitoring
- Numbers of children screened
- Preschool age
- School-age
- Student progress data
- Needs assessment information

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the Wessington Springs School District provides a free appropriate public education (FAPE) to all eligible children with disabilities.

The district ensures that should any child with a disability be suspended or expelled from school for more than 10 cumulative school days he/she will be provided FAPE.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under free appropriate public education as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 3 – Appropriate Evaluation**

A comprehensive evaluation is conducted by a team of knowledgeable staff, which also includes parental input. A valid and reliable evaluation will result in effective individualized education programs for eligible students. The specific areas addressed in principle three are written notice and consent for evaluation, evaluation procedures and instruments, eligibility determination, reevaluation and continuing eligibility.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Disabling Conditions
- Exiting Information
- Placement by Age
- Placement by Disabling Condition
- Teacher file reviews
- Prior notice
- Telephone log
- Evaluation report
- Surveys
- General curriculum information
- Comprehensive plan
- Initial referral log
- Needs assessment information

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the Wessington Springs School District provides appropriate written notice and obtains informed consent before assessments are administered to a child as part of an evaluation or reevaluation. The district ensures evaluation or reevaluation procedures and instruments meet the minimum requirements for evaluation procedures and that students are properly identified through the evaluation process. The district ensures reevaluations are conducted in accordance with all procedural requirements to ensure students are appropriately evaluated for continuing eligibility.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under appropriate evaluation as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 4 – Procedural Safeguards**

Parents of children with disabilities have certain rights available. The school makes parents aware of these rights and makes sure they are understood. The specific areas addressed in principle four are adult student/transfer of rights, content of rights, consent, written notice, confidentiality and access to records, independent educational evaluation (IEE), complaint procedures, and due process hearings.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Hearings
- Teacher file reviews
- Surveys
- Comprehensive plan
- Parental rights document
- Consent and prior notice forms
- Needs assessment information
- Public awareness information

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the Wessington Springs School District ensures parents are informed of their parental rights under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA). The parents have been fully informed in their native language or another mode of communication of all information relevant to the activity for which consent is sought. The district ensures the rights of a child are protected if no parent can be identified.

Wessington Springs School District provides the parents of a child in need of special education and/or related services with the opportunity to inspect and review all educational records concerning the identification, evaluation, and educational placement of the child and the provision of a free appropriate public education. The district has policies and procedures in place for responding to complaint and due process actions that ensure compliance.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under procedural safeguards as concluded by the steering committee.

## **Principle 5 – Individualized Education Program**

The Individualized Education Program (IEP) is a written document for a child with a disability that is developed, reviewed and revised by the IEP team, which includes

the parent. The specific areas addressed in principle five are IEP team, IEP content, transition components for secondary IEPs, annual reviews, transition from early intervention program, and IEP related issues.

## **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Early Intervention (Part C) Exit Information
- Complaints
- Hearings
- Comprehensive plan
- Teacher file reviews
- Student progress data
- Needs assessment information

### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded the Wessington Springs School District ensures that written notice is provided for all IEP meetings and includes all required content. The IEP team is comprised of appropriate team membership and meets all identified responsibilities. The IEP contains all required content, with the exception of progress reporting to parents as often as required.

The district ensures that transition plans for students are a coordinated set of activities, reflecting student strengths and interests, to prepare them for post school activities. Policies and procedures in place to ensure an appropriate IEP is developed and in effect for each eligible student.

### **Needs improvement**

The steering committee concluded communication with parents could be improved. In the survey the parents didn't understand that services start immediately. The district will send a letter home to notify the parents. Progress reports were not sent home for all special education students at the end of every nine week period.

## **Validation Results**

### **Meets requirements**

The monitoring team agrees that written notice, IEP team membership, IEP policies and transition services meet requirements as concluded by the steering committee. Progress towards the annual goals is provided to parent quarterly in conjunction with the student's report card. The district communicates with parents on a routine basis.

### **Needs assistance**

#### **ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP) Present level of academic achievement and functional performance and annual goals**

A student's IEP must contain present levels of academic achievement and functional performance based upon the skill areas affected by the student's identified disability. The present levels of academic achievement and functional performance

(PLAAFPs) are based upon the functional assessment information gathered during the comprehensive evaluation process.

The monitoring team found student files lacked the required content in the PLAAFPs (i.e. specific skill area(s) affected by the student's disability, strengths and needs). File reviews indicated functional assessments in the areas of disability are not sufficient to acquire the skill-based information needed to develop present levels of academic achievement and functional performance. Skill-based information available in some functional assessment reports was not used in the PLAAFP and therefore did not link to the annual goals. Annual goals did not consistently specify skills the student could reasonably accomplish within a 12 month period. For example, "will develop appropriate classroom behavior and maintain concentration..." and "when given vocabulary and problem solving situations and exercised in consumer math applicants ...will demonstrate understanding of these concepts by maintaining a 78% average in her class work".

**ARSD 24:05:27:01.03 Content of individualized education program (IEP)**

A student's IEP must contain a statement of the student's special education and related services provided to the student. The student's IEP must also indicate the location of those services.

**CFR 300.320 (a)(7) Content Initiation, Frequency, Location and Duration of Services**

What is required is that the IEP include information about the amount of services that will be provided to the child, so that the level of the agency's commitment of resources will be clear to parents and other IEP team members. The amount of time to be committed to each the various services to be provided must be appropriate to the specific service and clearly state in the IEP in a manner that can be understood by all involved into the development and implementation the IEP.

Through interview and a review of student records, the monitoring team concluded the district did not specifically state the specific special education services to be provided in the IEP. For example the service to be provided was not specified (i.e. math, reading) or the location of the service was omitted.

**§300.320 Definition of individualized education program.**

(a) General. As used in this part, the term individualized education program or IEP means a written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance with §§300.320 through 300.324, and that must include--

(6)(i) A statement of any individual appropriate accommodations that are necessary to measure the academic achievement and functional performance of the child on State and district wide assessments.

Through interview and a review of student records the team found that accommodations were being provided during state and district-wide assessments that were not required or needed by the student as part of their education program.

## **Principle 6 – Least Restrictive Environment**

After the IEP is developed or reviewed, the IEP team must decide where the IEP services are to be provided. Consideration begins in the general education classroom for school age students. The specific areas addressed in principle six are placement decisions, consent for initial placement, least restrictive environment procedures, preschool children, and LRE related issues.

### **Steering Committee Self-Assessment Summary**

Data sources used:

- Disabling Conditions
- Enrollment Information
- File reviews
- Parent, Student, General educator surveys
- General curriculum information
- Personnel training

#### **Promising practice**

The steering committee concluded from the 2003-04 through the 2005-06 school years a Wessington Springs special education teacher and the regular education teacher have team taught. This facilitated the learning for two students with significant disabilities as well as the learning of all students in the class. Team teaching allowed both the children to become successful students with minimal special education assistance.

#### **Meets requirements**

The steering committee concluded all children receive services in the least restrictive environment with the supports they need for their successful participation.

### **Validation Results**

#### **Meets Requirement**

The monitoring team agrees with all areas identified as meeting requirements under least restrictive environment as concluded by the steering committee.

The monitoring team recognizes the value of the teaching strategies used to maintain student participation in the general education setting however, the team could not validate team teaching as an area of promising practice.